

# The American Civil War Society Ltd

## Notes for guidance on correct answers to the Firearms Safe Practice Examination

### Mounted Troops

These tests can be conducted piecemeal and built up over a number of events or other opportunities. **ALL** those who ride on a battlefield and/or act in any mounted capacity including Cavalry, Horse Artillery, Dragoons, Mounted Infantry or Waggoner's, need to do this test once a year. Each soldier should have his/her own test sheet (or, preferably, a senior NCO holds all test sheets until all tests completed), kept by company, and as each part is successfully passed, tick it off and examiner initials with a date. At conclusion of all parts the examining officer and the soldier sign and then a copy to Soldier, copy held by Company and copy to H&S Director.

The scope of these tests permits mounted troops to operate whilst either mounted or dismounted as Cavalry or Dragoons (mounted rifles) operating in small groups using appropriate mounted weapons. The tests **DO NOT** qualify mounted troops to operate as Artillery or Line Infantry **UNLESS** proper training and drill has been provided by an appropriate officer. Soldiers who are members of more than one unit must complete an FSPC for each arm of service that they are members of.

#### 1. **Tack up**

The soldier should identify and select appropriate tack including saddle, bit and bridle and demonstrate that all items are correctly fitted to ensure the safety and comfort of both horse and rider. The soldier should select and fit all horse accoutrements including holsters, boots, saddlebags, blankets and valises to provide a secure and safe carriage of the soldier's equipment.

#### 2. **Mount and Dismount**

The soldier should mount dressed in battle order with uniform correctly fitted and carrying his personal weapons, carbines may be inserted in a boot or if preferred slung. The soldier should mount lightly and quickly without putting undue strain on the horse or tack, climbing the horse is not acceptable. Once mounted the soldier should demonstrate the correct position for all carried equipment.

The soldier should prepare to dismount on the command (slinging and stowing equipment as necessary) and should then dismount smartly and stand to horse.

#### 3. **Basic Riding Skills**

The soldier should ride in a 20 M circle at the walk on both the left and right rein using the correct aids, his seat should be secure and his leg position should be correct, the mount should be on the bit and be forward going demonstrating clear control by the rider. This should be repeated in **sitting** trot, and at the canter. The exercise should be sustained until the rider has demonstrated his basic riding

ability to the satisfaction of the examiner. Where horsemanship needs improvement the examiner must be satisfied that the rider is both safe and in control before passing the rider.

4. **Basic Drill**

The soldier must understand and be able to execute the following commands Stand to Horse, Mount, Form fours, March, Halt, Turn in to line, Prepare to Dismount, Dismount, Dismiss.

5. **Wheeling and Turning in the ranks**

The soldier must be able ride (at all paces) in two's, fours, and line, maintaining the correct safe distance between, rank and file. The soldier must be able to wheel and turn in all paces, oblique at the walk and trot, draw and return all weapons at the walk, fire safely in line, and carry out the charge.

6. **Safety with Edged Weapons**

The soldier must correctly state how the sabre is to be prepared for battle, demonstrate safe combat with both mounted and dismounted troops, understand the cuts and guards, understand the safety of the horse and rider. Explain what actions are safe and permitted (fencing, striking with the flat) and what is not permitted (use of the point or edge, not to strike muskets, or anywhere except the torso).

7. **Safe Distances and elevation for firing rifle, pistol and carbine**

The soldier must correctly state the minimum safe distance for firing at both mounted and dismounted troops (15 M) and must demonstrate their understanding of the different elevations needed when engaging mounted and dismounted troops.

8. **Loading/priming/cartridge preparation.**

Examiner to run through the drills with the soldier. Dry, by mime. It must be clear no hands end up over the muzzle, save when pouring powder, and muzzle must at all time be inclined away from face and not towards anybody else's face. No use of ramrods except if fixed to the weapon, however, it may be used when expressly permitted e.g. filming work OR living history, with prior consent of a Director/Army Commander. A confidence with the weapon and a clear ability to handle it safely and positively is to be demonstrated. Cartridge preparation is to include soldier explaining how an empty cartridge to be made (no staples, masking tape or sellotape). Heavy duty paper, e.g. telephone directory, sheets or thicker, not recommended for muskets, but might be appropriate for other types of weapon. How much gunpowder to load? Depending on calibre of gun but in any event NOT MORE than 65 grains. Needs to know how to check. Suggest consult gunsmith or Armourer Sgt. On (i) how to measure right amount for THAT weapon and (ii) how to ensure load never excessive. Show how to remove loaded cartridge from ammunition pouch, bite off twisted paper end so that powder

measured-charge exposed and pour in from side of muzzle. ONLY gunpowder goes down the barrel – NOTHING else.

#### 9. **Weapon Maintenance**

Cleanliness and safety are the main issues. Ask the soldier how a black powder weapon is to be cleaned and when. After each day's firing is a good answer. After a weekend's events is acceptable, provided that the nipple is checked and cleaned (e.g. pricked out etc.) once a day minimum. Prior to firing each day, the weapon must be checked for safe operation e.g. does NOT fire on half cock, ONLY on full cock, that hammer and nipple strike alignment is correct and that trigger pull is firm and true.

Check all screws tight and nothing loose, split or rusted. Why is it important to ensure your gun is clean? So it works! So the corrosive effect of black powder residue does not rust through barrel anywhere/make use of weapon unsafe to fire or anybody else. Clean by wiping off mud and muck from external surfaces and pour boiling water down barrel from muzzle end. Ideally, nipple should be removed and cleaned separately. Once a clean flow of water out of nipple achieved, that is acceptable. Better still, use black powder solvent or washing up liquid to get firing residue removed from all internal surfaces.

Wire brush attachment to ramrod or cleaning rod also acceptable to clean and scour-out after use of boiling water. Then barrel and nipple areas must be dried out: small pieces of dry cloth on cleaning rod/ram rod attachment used until all dry. A light film of gun oil/3 in one/light squirt of WD40 also advisable but not an excessive amount of oil. Ensure chamber below nipple and touchhole into barrel clear and clean, so that percussion cap spark has free access to ignite powder. Oil on the internal trigger and spring mechanism to ensure proper operation and to prevent corrosion is also recommended. Soldier must demonstrate need to clean for safety reasons and common sense.

#### 10. **Safe Distances/elevation for firing**

Never fire directly at any person or animal. When firing in massed ranks, elevate weapon to between 20 degrees and 30 degrees from horizontal, especially when volleying the crowd at the end of an event. Ensure nothing down barrel other than gunpowder ever: no paper: no ram rod etc. etc. Discharge of musketry must NOT take place at any person when closer than 15 metres. Never fire when it is unsafe to do so or if you have concerns. Beware firing in close country e.g. woods/bushes : you may not have a clear line of sight and your hammer must not be cocked until the very last moment before firing – a trip or a branch may render you or the weapon unsafe. The examiner can also ask “How do you cross an obstacle with a loaded weapon? “ This will test the soldier's practicality and common sense. Answer must include –remove percussion cap, hammer down and either hand gun to another with muzzle elevated as you cross fence, ditch etc. and recover and re-prime once it is safe to do so, or cross with weapon in elevated position, so muzzle does not point at you or anyone else.

If charged when loaded **Never** go into hand-to-hand combat when loaded.

If assaulted by the other side when you are loaded, discharge your gun safely (elevated) if you can. If not possible, fall to the ground and pretend to be dead. Get your percussion cap off the nipple and hammer down. Ensure gun is safe and cannot go off. If surprised, tell your assailant clearly and loudly you are loaded and they should give you space to make safe.

Never, ever start hand-to-hand with a loaded gun –that’s how accidents happen.

11. **Misfire procedures on Black Powder weapons /whistles on a battlefield**

If your weapon fails to fire, re-cap and try again. If it continues to fail to fire, tell an Officer or NCO and pull out of line to the rear, keeping the muzzle safely elevated. Once you are a safe distance, out of the fight, check the weapon. Has something fallen off or broken? Does the hammer operate? Use a pricker to clear the nipple/touch hole. Perhaps take out nipple to clear any blockages. You may not be able to do this whilst mounted, if you cannot clear the weapon remove the caps and stow it in a boot or holster and report back the formation commander when you can carry on as normal again **DO NOT ATTEMPT to REUSE** that weapon until properly cleared when dismounted.

When whistles or a whistle sounds on a battlefield – that signifies a **REAL** casualty. Stop what you are doing and kneel down. All mounted troops should immediately halt. The person with, or near, the injured person will attract the attention of the Medics. (Hat on raised sword or musket etc). When the person in charge of your unit deems it safe or appropriate to carry on, you will be so ordered.

Help an injured person and/or medics if you can and you are near, but stay out of danger yourself. Secure and clear any abandoned weaponry.

12. **Capping off at the end of an event – why?**

To ensure the weapon is NOT loaded with any gunpowder, for safety reasons (therefore the weapon must be handled as if it was loaded).

What happens next? Spring rammers or other appropriate safety procedures for other weapons – so your supervising officer and NCO can physically hear/have demonstrated all barrels in the unit are empty.

13. **Clearing the field**

It is essential to thoroughly and conscientiously clear the field of battle at the end of the event to ensure no explosives, pyrotechnic effects or anything dangerous or any lost equipment remains before anybody else (e.g. member of the public) is allowed anywhere near. It is also an exercise in tidying-up and removing litter and any dropped cartridge papers. Perhaps that empty looking “cartridge paper still does have a little gunpowder in it, although NO cartridge papers should have been dropped anyway. If a child picks it up, plays with it, eats it or sets it alight, it will be harmed. This must NOT happen. Also the Society’s very expensive Public Liability Insurances will be claimed against and the cost of the policy on its renewal will rocket with an adverse claims experience. Therefore it is in everybody’s interests to ensure the event site is clear and safe immediately after the end of the event. While

the artillery and pyro teams will be responsible for their own mess, help to fill in divots or pointing-out undischarged ground charges would be useful: DO NOT attempt to dig up a ground charge, leave that job to the pyro team, but guard the site until done.

14. **Artillery Safety**

When guns are in battery, in firing position and LOADED, other arms must NOT come within 25 meters of the muzzles within the arc of fire. When gun crew are physically loading and/or hold their rammer and worming tools upright, you know it's loaded.

If the gun crew hold or have put the gun tools crossways (X) it means gun IS LOADED but has had a misfire, or some other problem, so stay clear and again do not go within 25 m of the muzzle.

Cavalry need to be especially wary of artillery because of the speed of the horses individuals who become separated from their unit must be particularly vigilant and pay attention to the arc of fire

Cavalry may not pass in front of loaded or misfired guns at less than 25 m unless the battery commander has indicated it is safe to pass.

15. **Equine safety measures**

A bolting horse and/or a horse that has unseated its rider are risks to troops and the public, the horse is unpredictable and uncontrollable. Infantry are instructed to STAND STILL and not to move or run. The rider should avoid the soldier on the ground.

“Man Down” procedure – in the event of a rider falling the unit will adopt the “Man Down” procedure. This involves forming a protective cordon at a safe distance to prevent the casualty being trampled by a loose horse. One rider will be detailed to dismount and assess the situation. The QM Sgt/ Cpl is responsible for summoning medical assistance and recovering any loose horses (when he is on duty)

16. **Ground Charges and Pyrotechnics**

The examinee must demonstrate a common sense understanding of what to look out for with ground charges e.g. wires leading to them and the displaced earth etc. where one is buried .They need to **avoid the area of the ground charge** as much as possible (save when a formed body of troops under orders – in which case the commander will have ensured it is safe to do so by reference to pyro team operatives).

Ground Charges and aerial pyro come in all sorts and sizes: you can never know what is buried at the end of the detonation wires. The minimum safe distance is 15 m. but beware (a) falling debris on detonation, so never look up and (b) effects of blast. Also blown charges holes and detonator wires are trip hazards. Wires pulled before detonation might disconnect a ground charge and render it unsafe, so watch where you're going and always be cautious and observant.